

31st Edition

**Alberta Council on Admissions
and Transfer**

Annual Report

**April 1, 2005 –
March 31, 2006**



Vision Statement

To be recognized nationally and internationally as the premier post-secondary admissions and transfer system.



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Chair's Report

The Honourable Denis Herard
Minister of Advanced Education
204 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
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Dear Minister Herard:

On behalf of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer and in accordance with the Council's terms of reference, I have the honour of providing you with the Thirty-First Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2006.

Alberta's post-secondary institutions continue to be strongly committed to Alberta's transfer system, whose basic principle is that a student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated. Council's work revolves around matters that will assist learners in their quest for lifelong learning. The 31st edition of the *Alberta Transfer Guide* showcases the post-secondary institutions' willingness to cooperate and collaborate for the benefit of the learner.

As the Alberta post-secondary scene changes, ACAT adapts and progresses. Thanks to our network of "Contact Persons" which includes a representative from each of the 36 post-secondary institutions, the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* now has over 27, 000 active and nearly 38, 000 grandfathered transfer agreements.

Two major research projects were completed in 2005-2006. One examined how transfer agreements are negotiated in Alberta's post-secondary system. The other investigated the state of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) at Alberta post-secondary institutions, specifically with regard to learning acquired in non-traditional ways. Both reports resulted in resulted in handbooks on best practice which are posted on ACAT's website. The handbook on Best Practices in Credit Transfer will ensure continuity of smooth transfer within the province, but will also assist other jurisdictions as they set up their own transfer systems. The handbook on Best Practices in PLAR will assist those Alberta post-secondary institutions which do not yet have processes in place. As a result of the latter report, Council also strongly recommended that a forum on PLAR be held to enhance the development of PLAR at post-secondary institutions in Alberta. Dates were set for June of 2006 and planning for the forum began in November of 2005.



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the post-secondary institutions that are part of Alberta's transfer system who continue to explore ways and means of facilitating smooth transitions for students. I would also like to thank the Ministry for the support provided by the Secretariat and the department. I look forward to working with the Council and its member institutions as the province moves forward with the recommendations from *A Learning Alberta*.

Sincerely,



Lucille R. Walter, BEd, DipEd
Chair



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Vision

Alberta's post-secondary institutions work in collaborative partnerships to support a learning society that has smooth and effective admission, transfer and recognition of prior learning in order to maximize each individual's learning opportunities.

Mission

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is to be a catalyst for necessary change and an advocate for learners in the areas of admission and transfer to educational programs.

ACAT provides leadership and direction in the improvement and enlargement of educational opportunities for learners through inter-institutional transfer.

ACAT also plays an active role in the implementation of these policies through monitoring, mediation and research. Council has a continuing responsibility for facilitating improvement in communications and working relationships across all institutions and programs regarding the admission of transfer students and the award of transfer credit.

To carry out its mission, ACAT:

- Identifies issues and explores resolutions to these issues with stakeholders;
- Advocates for learners at both a general level through its Principles and specific level through interaction of ACAT's staff with learners;
- Communicates with stakeholders and encourages communications among stakeholders on matters regarding admissions and transfer;
- Provides a forum for discussion of issues arising out of environmental change and trends related to post-secondary education; and
- Conducts research to appropriately inform all participants and stakeholders in the transfer system.



Highlights from Strategic Priorities

ACAT identified five key strategic priorities to respond to the significant opportunities and challenges influencing its ability to achieve its goals and strategies for 2004-07. Through its review of internal and external challenges, the strategic priorities described below were identified and worked on concurrently. These priorities are in addition to the important ongoing core businesses of ACAT.

Learner Transitions

ACAT continued to provide leadership to ensure that secondary to post-secondary admission issues were addressed. Further work was done to ensure clarity of information for high school students to help them select appropriate courses to meet entrance requirements of post-secondary programs through enhancements to the *Transfer Guide* and information provided in Learning Clicks presentations.

National and International Leadership

As a leader in admissions and transfer, ACAT continued to assist other jurisdictions in Canada understand the transfer system by participating on the Council of Ministers of Education Canada Working Group on Transfer.

The Best Practices in Transfer research project and accompanying Handbook were completed. The Handbook provides direction for the completion of transfer credit agreements between post-secondary institutions.

ACAT's Profile

The profile of ACAT was raised through enhanced communications, increased public profile and improved communication tools. Presentations were made at a number of local, provincial, national, and international conferences and workshops.

Recognition of Prior Learning

The Best Practices in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition research project and accompanying handbook were completed.

Alberta Recognizes Learning, a Forum on PLAR will be held June 13 & 14, 2006 in Edmonton.



Goals and Accomplishments

ACAT has identified four goals with specific outcomes that describe the end results it wants to achieve in fulfilling its mission.

Core Business One: Admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions are clearly articulated.
ADMISSION

GOAL 1 Facilitate the development and maintenance of fair and equitable admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions.

- Outcomes**
- 1.1 Students make smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary studies.
 - 1.2 Students have improved opportunities to apply for admission.

Accomplishments

Transitions:

- The Engineering Articulation committee met to clarify transition for students moving from first year Engineering into second year at U of A and U of C.
- The Biological Sciences Articulation committee met to clarify and update the pathways chart for mutual recognition of the first two years of the university program.
- ACAT consulted with Aboriginal Colleges to discuss challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal students in Alberta. An articulation committee will be formed to address transfer issues in the Cree language.

Academic Upgrading:

- ACAT continued to consult with the Provincial Academic Upgrading Coordinators (PAUC) to explore expansion of academic upgrading courses for admission to post-secondary programs.
- Charts illustrating academic upgrading courses accepted for admission to college, technical institute, university or private university college programs in lieu of those offered in regular high school programs were published.



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Core Business Two: Facilitate agreements among post-secondary institutions to acknowledge and recognize appropriate previous learning experience.
TRANSFER

GOAL 2 Learners receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Outcomes 2.1 An effective and efficient student transfer system.
2.2 Prior learning assessments are given system-wide recognition.

Accomplishments

Enhancing the Transfer System

- A "Best Practices in Transfer" handbook was published to facilitate transfer agreement process and negotiation between post-secondary institutions.
- 84% increase in the number of by-program transfer agreements in the 2005-2006 *Alberta Transfer Guide* and on the web site.
- Published the *Alberta Transfer Guide* and updated the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* weekly.

Monitoring Effectiveness of Transfer

- Produced the annual Transfer Patterns Study.
- Chair's membership on the Campus Alberta Quality Council ensures that degree approval process includes consideration of transfer credit.

Ensuring Accuracy of Transfer Information

- Continued to enhance collaboration with institutional Contact Persons to review all transfer agreements before production of the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

Supporting the Enhancement of Prior Learning

- A handbook on "The Best Practices in PLAR in Alberta" was completed.
- *Alberta Recognizes Learning. A Forum on PLAR*, which will be held June 13 and 14, 2006 in Edmonton is currently being planned. It is expected that close to 200 participants will attend the event, which includes concurrent sessions by PLAR experts from across Canada and focus groups where participants will share concerns, solutions and next steps for PLAR in Alberta.



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Core Business Three: Ensure that learners and other stakeholders have timely and accurate information about admissions requirements, course and program transfer opportunities and transfer policies, and provide a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

COMMUNICATION

GOAL 3 Learners have access to current, accurate information on admissions and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

- Outcomes**
- 3.1 Information to assist high school and potential transfer students is available.
 - 3.2 Alberta post-secondary institutions have a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

Accomplishments

Enhance Information Available to Students

- Continued to work with institutional partners to produce an annual compilation of all transfer agreements contained within the *Alberta Transfer Guide* and the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide*.
- Promoted the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) through the *Alberta Transfer Guide* and Learning Clicks.
- The ACAT public web site received nearly 5 million hits. This is an increase of nearly 1 million hits from the previous year.
- Continued to provide the Transfer Infoline service by responding to over 300 e-mail and telephone inquiries.
- Continued implementation of the ACAT Communication Plan through presentations to students, high school counselors, career advisors and other stakeholders.

Transitions:

- Continued to produce advising charts to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.
- Began exploring the feasibility of providing information on transfer agreements between Alberta institutions and institutions in other jurisdictions. Work will continue in this area.

Inter-Institutional Discussions:

- Ensured there was an opportunity for a round table discussion at every ACAT meeting.
- Ensured the host institution at ACAT meetings has an opportunity to make a presentation on their institution.
- Maintained the Contact Persons listserve as a communication medium.
- Held annual Contact Persons meeting, with which participants expressed satisfaction.



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Core Business Four: Inform Albertans about the benefits of our admissions and transfer system, and assist and advise other jurisdictions about the procedures for and benefits of establishing and maintaining an efficient and effective admissions and transfer system.

**EDUCATION
&
ADVOCACY**

GOAL 4 Albertans are informed about the benefits of our admissions and transfer system and ACAT serves as a model for other jurisdictions.

- Outcomes**
- 4.1** Albertans are aware of the benefits of our admissions and transfer system.
 - 4.2** Provide advice and assistance to promote inter-provincial portability of courses and programs.

Accomplishments

Enhance Understanding of the Benefits of Transfer

- Presentations were made at conferences, workshops, career fairs and within Alberta Advanced Education to raise general awareness of ACAT.
- Presentation made at the 3rd Biennial Conference on Transfer and Articulation in Indianapolis, Indiana. Attendees expressed satisfaction with the presentation.
- The Chair met with the executives of ACTISEC and CAUS.

Increase use of transfer guides in other provinces

- Participated in national meetings on credit transfer and PLAR.
- Work is continuing on the possibility of establishing a Canadian association on credit transfer and plans were made for ACAT to host a meeting of Transfer Credit professionals in Edmonton on June 20 and 21.
- Received anecdotal evidence that ACAT is perceived as a national leader in the establishment of admissions and transfer systems.



